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Interim Executive Minister

Included in this issue:

- * *National Institute
for Civil Discourse*
- * *Planned Giving*
- * *Progress Report*
- * *Annual Gathering*
- * *Open Churches*
- * *Parish Paper*

Roads Disappear & Words Change

I had a strange dream last night. (Aren't all dreams strange?) I was confidently driving home on the Interstate Highway, gliding along, deep in my comfort zone when I felt a bump and discovered that I was in midst of a field of soy beans. For no reason, I suddenly found myself in the field.

What to do? I clearly had to get back onto the highway so I looked around to find my way back only to discover that there were no highways to be found! The way home had disappeared — and I startled myself awake.

It's almost a parable. It's a question without an answer. What to do when the well known, well traveled, highly effective road disappears?

I'm 73 and I can tell you that nearly every retired person I know is fully aware of the question. Pathways, habits, practices, routines that have been followed for 40 or more years suddenly disappear and, in retirement, we are required to invent something new. In some measure, we are required to reinvent ourselves. We are in a field without roads, and something new has to happen. It would hardly seem fair, but it turns out to be mostly fun.

Another story. I spent some of my growing-up years in the rural south. The linguistic custom of my little town was to practice the fine art of understatement. We saved the superlatives for church. So when we had Sunday dinner, perhaps the finest fried chicken that ever crossed one's lips and tongue, and somebody asked, "How was it?", we answered, with a slow and measured drawl, "Not bad, not bad at all." Translation: That was the finest thing that I have ever tasted.

Note the contrast. Not long ago I visited my dental hygienist, a delightful young woman, who asked me to turn a bit towards her and open wider. I complied, and she said, "Awesome!" Awesome? In a burger restaurant recently, I ordered a hamburger with cheese, mustard and pickles, and the guy behind the counter said, "Awesome!" Awesome? To this old guy, opening your mouth and ordering a hamburger are not awesome events.

Even worse, I was asked how the burger was, and I slipped into my old argot and said, "Not bad, not bad at all," and the poor guy acted as if he had been insulted. I did not say "Awesome."

In the third grade in another small town school, a teacher spent what felt like an eternity teaching me to say, "Ma'am." I learned, somewhat painfully, that every female from birth to death could and often should be addressed as, "Ma'am." It was a matter of common respect. Imagine my reaction when I read in a paper last week that an elementary student had addressed his teacher as, "Ma'am," and was punished for it. He had to write, "Ma'am" on a piece of paper a whole bunch of times. She doesn't like the word! He is being respectful, and she does not like that form of respect. What happened?

Old roads disappear. Language changes. Familiar phrases fail to communicate. We find ourselves feeling like strangers in our own place, and we do not much like it. I still prefer understatement and “Ma’am.” Which is okay until I realize that my language does not communicate well with my own children and grandchildren.

It is like I’m sitting in a field, and I don’t have ready road to them unless I am ready to do something different, The question is, “What am I willing to do, what new language will I learn to speak, to try to connect with generations who do not communicate as I?” I could demand that they learn my language, but we all know how well that will work.

To connect with our grandchildren and their peers, we may have to travel a new way and learn a new language. It’s the issue every grandparent confronts and every church needs to engage.

SAVE THE DATE

GLORIFYING GOD BY PURSUING MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE THROUGH ACTIVE LISTENING

Coming February 15-16, 2019



**National Institute for
Civil Discourse**

Dr. Lukensmeyer-
Executive Director



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- ❖ FOCUS is a newsletter published for professional church leaders in the Central Region, and it is distributed monthly. It is also available on the Region website, <https://abccr.org/>.
- ❖ The deadline for FOCUS is the first of the month of publication.
- ❖ A variation in content and format is required for copy to be printed in two or more successive issues.

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Find local, regional, national and international mission opportunities and inspiration for your own projects and activities with mission emphasis at <https://www.facebook.com/abccr.missions>

Please like and share the posts made on these Central Region social media accounts to help us spread the news!

Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation

Planned Giving

A Ministry of American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

The Joy of Giving!

*What was your reaction to this title?
“Yeah, right!” or perhaps “Maybe for someone
who’s rich, but not me!”*

Whether the gift is time, effort or money, it actually does produce joy in the giver as well as the one who receives it. Psychologists have found that the act of giving can produce satisfaction, which comes when the giver sees the recipient’s gratitude. Some experts even believe that humans are wired to be generous!

Your gift could be a cheerful attitude in doing a mundane job! If we have a cheerful attitude, desire to serve, and attention to detail we can be obeying Paul’s description of how we are to work in Col. 3:23 “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.”

We live in a world where people are seeking happiness by having the newest gadget or technology or car or bigger homes. We, as Christians, know that none of these bring true joy. Perhaps that’s why Paul, when encouraging the church in Thessalonica to build up their faith community, urged them to “Encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.” I Thess. 5:14. Earlier he had also cited Jesus’s words, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)

When we give, we get an insight into how God feels. We understand why He’s so delighted to give us His love, and we share in His joy and the satisfaction of blessing others.

Churches have begun their fall activities and are starting to prepare budgets for next year. Have you been, or are you doing all that God would have you to do? This may be in service or financial gifts – only you and God know the answer to that.

There are many ways to use what God has generously allowed you to accumulate financially. I’d love to discuss ways that would fit your desires. If you have an IRA, remember that (if you’re over 70 ½) you can give up to \$100,000 annually to a ministry, and it will be tax free. This is much better than leaving it to a relative who would have to pay taxes on it.

I’d love to come visit you and/or your church to discuss various possibilities for giving. There is no obligation or charge for my services, so please contact me.

Rev. Wilma E. Engle, Director of Planned Giving, wilmaengle@juno.com
6745 Interurban, Wichita, KS 67204-1323, 316-838-3065 or cell 316-644-2069

American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

Mission Giving for August 2018

	2018	2017	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
United Mission	\$66,009.22	\$65,693.19	\$316.03	0.48%
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$3,022.92	\$2,246.84	\$776.08	34.54%
American Baptist Mission Support	\$102,804.62	\$117,879.89	-\$15,075.27	-12.78%

Mission Giving August YTD

	2018	2017	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$21,689.48	\$24,490.02	-\$2,800.54	-11.43%
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$47,002.99	\$46,439.49	\$563.50	1.21%
World Mission Offering	\$17,800.49	\$16,607.63	\$1,192.86	7.18%
Retired Ministers & Missionaries	\$24,699.88	\$24,731.00	-\$31.12	-0.12%
Region Offering	\$45,978.76	\$38,622.89	\$7,355.87	19.04%
Institutional Support Process	\$44,184.65	\$46,930.02	-\$2,745.37	-5.84%
Specifics	\$95,774.12	\$135,416.94	-\$39,642.82	-29.27%
American Baptist Mission Support	\$860,375.02	\$908,285.67	-\$47,910.65	-5.27%

Our Church's Giving for August

United Mission	\$ _____
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$ _____
American Baptist Mission Support	\$ _____

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Gathering

October 12-13

CROSS WIND CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER

ABCCR.ORG




Rev. Dr. Sharon T. Koh
Global Consultants
International Ministries



Rev. Dr. Dan Buttry
Sharon Buttry
Global Consultants
International Ministries





Finding Unity Through Faith

Keynote Speaker:
Rev. Sharon Koh
IM Executive Director

2018 Annual Gathering

Friday Night Worship will feature ethnic diversity and different modes of worship, painting, music and native hymns.

SCHEDULE

Friday: Oct. 12

7:30-9:15 Registration
8:00-9:00 Breakfast
9:30 Business Session
10:45 Worship Session #1
12:00 Lunch
1:30 Workshops
2:30 Break
3:00 Worship Session #2
State of the Region
6:00 Dinner
7:15 Celebration of Diversity
Worship Night

Saturday: Oct. 13

7:30 Camping Breakfast
8:45 Workshops
10:15 Break
10:45 Worship Session #3
Installation Service:
New Executive Minister
12:00 AB Women Ministries &
AB Men Luncheons

WORKSHOPS

In addition to workshops led by speakers, Rev. Sharon Koh and Global Peace Consultants, Dan and Sharon Buttry, there will be four other workshops offered.

Church Marketing 101

Olivia Lahman, Director of Marketing at Junkluggers KC

Learn the best way to use social media and marketing to connect with the people in your own community.

Improve Your Ability to Serve Those with Disabilities

Rev. Rodger Charles, Pastor at FBC, Peabody

Learn how to identify and deal more properly and deliberately with the disabled and find tools which can be applied in reaching the lost. Expect a proactive action plan to impact the entire community, not just those with disabilities.

Exploring Liturgical Worship:

How to Incorporate Liturgy into Our Worship and Why

Rev. Lyndon Perry, Pastor of Faith Renewal Baptist Church, Wichita

Come and explore the biblical and historical basis for being more intentional about incorporating liturgical elements into our worship and provide some practical suggestions for doing so.

Congregational Discovery

Rev. Dr. Steve Neal, Pastor of First Baptist Church of Turner

This workshop will introduce participants to five possible areas of congregational discovery: Who they are, whose they are, what they do, how they do what they do, and why they do what they do.

Register at abccr.org



Our Mission: To Provide Resources and Services to Assist, Challenge, Empower and Represent Local Congregations in Ministry.

Open Churches in the Central Region – September 2018

Join ABCCR staff members in prayer as we remember churches and pastors going through transition.

Church	Interim Minister
<i>Cedar Vale, FBC</i>	
<i>Coffeyville, FBC</i>	Rodger Tyrell, ABCCR Interim
<i>Council Grove, FBC</i>	Jim Autrey, ABCCR Interim
<i>Garden City, FBC</i>	
<i>Garnett, FBC</i>	Melinda Oberhelman, ABCCR Interim
<i>Goddard, FBC</i>	Rick Nelson, ABCCR Interim
<i>Horton, FBC</i>	James Callaway, ABCCR Interim
<i>Hutchinson, FBC</i>	Darrell Treat, ABCCR Interim
<i>McPherson, FBC</i>	Timothy Conner, ABCCR Interim
<i>Osawatomie, FBC</i>	Larry Spray, Private Contract Interim
<i>Oswego, FBC</i>	Rick Qualls, ABCCR Interim
<i>Overland Park, FBC</i>	Amy Beckett, ABCCR Interim
<i>Simpson, FBC</i>	Dennis Finch will retire this summer
<i>Stafford, FBC</i>	
<i>Topeka, FBC</i>	Bob Roesler, ABCCR Interim
<i>Waverly, FBC</i>	Doug Crawshaw, ABCCR Interim
<i>Wichita, Meridian Ave</i>	Jim Zier anticipates retirement later this year
<i>Wichita, Pleasant Valley</i>	

*Persons interested in having their names before specific search committees should contact Dr. Joe Kutter, Dr. Nate Marsh, Rev. Mike Justice, or Rev. Julie Robinson. **Do not contact the church directly.***

Search and Call Updates

- Barnard, FBC has called Carolyn Allen as pastor.
- El Dorado, Park Avenue Baptist Church called Rev. Jurdan Counts from Nebraska as pastor.
- Topeka, North Topeka Baptist Church called Dave Stuart as pastor.
- Garnett, FBC, Council Grove, FBC and Topeka will candidate pastors this month.
- Several other congregations are doing neutral pulpits during the month of September.
- Osawatomie, FBC is a new church to the Open Churches list.

Celebrations and Prayer Concerns

- The Annual Gathering is October 11-13. This year’s Annual Gathering will have workshops, speakers, and trainings that speak to relevant issues churches are facing. Go to www.abccr.org for more information and to register online.
- Please keep Rev. Gordon Rhodes, ABCCR Interim, in your prayers as he deals with medical issues.
- On September 28th Pastor Travis Ball in Parsons, Kansas will have surgery to remove an acoustic neuroma.

CHECKING UP ON CLERGY HEALTH ASSESSING THE COST OF SACRED WORK

Many people feel called to their work and respond to job demands in ways that reflect a sense of vocation. But do we expect clergy to perform their calling with even greater devotion and sacrifice? Because clergy define their work as sacred, taking care of themselves may always be a lower priority. One writer describes the high cost of sacred work in this way: “if your backdrop is burning bushes and having a child at age ninety, or if it’s bumping into an angel with premarital plans for you . . . who are you to turn down a relatively minor request like leaving vacation to perform a funeral?”¹

The Latest Numbers

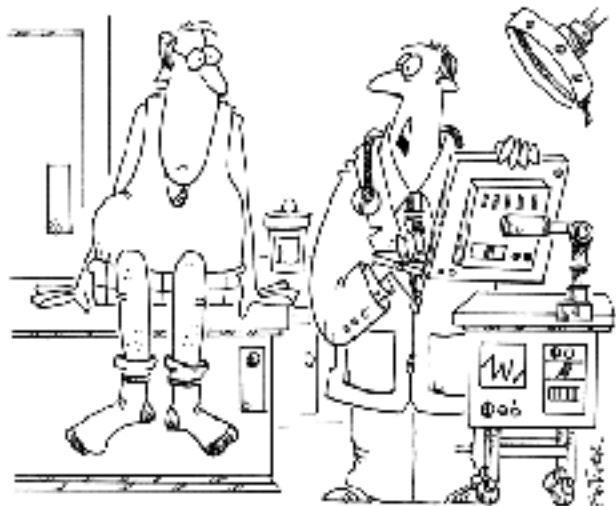
Findings from a ten-year, longitudinal study suggest that unraveling all the complexities of clergy health and well-being is not easy. Although the study drew from a large number of United Methodist clergy, the research results mirror findings from other Protestant clergy samples. This landmark study also carefully tracked intervention efforts and evaluated how individual clergy might change their health status and habits over time.²

Physical health. Just as health insurance costs for the general population continue to climb, the same holds true for clergy. In fact, these costs for clergy remain higher, partly because clergy submit more health care claims.³ National studies reveal clergy have higher rates of obesity than the general population, regardless of age. Obesity causes and complicates other health issues, especially chronic diseases, such as diabetes, arthritis, asthma, and heart disease.⁴ Lack of exercise and a damaging diet contribute to weight gain as well as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stress, and other health negatives.

Mental health. Levels of depression among clergy remain higher than the U.S. population as well. The study found 8.7% of clergy suffer from some depression (compared to 5.5% of the U.S. population). Both male and female clergy demonstrated these higher-than-average rates of depressive symptoms. This surprising finding runs counter to what appears in the general population, where

females typically present much higher depression rates than males. However, among clergy, the opposite pattern surfaces: twice as many male clergy report depressive symptoms compared to males in the U.S. (8.8% to 4.4%).⁵

What might be some of the causes behind these higher clergy depression rates? There are probably more reasons than can be explored here, but some possibilities include aging (the average age of clergy continues to scale upward), side effects of medications, long hours, presence of congregational conflict, unrealistic clergy expectations about ministry, excessive demands by congregants, and serving as the first line of support in difficult life circumstances (illness, death, divorce).⁶ Yet another factor could be self-selection. Some clergy who went through traumatic life events may seek out ministry as a healing experience. Their own life encounters could make them especially sympathetic to others’ suffering and form their approach to ministry. Henry Nouwen wrote about “the wounded healer,” who exemplifies how one’s own suffering can serve as a source of strength and hope for others.⁷



“WALKING THE WALK ISN’T ENOUGH...
IT’S TIME TO TRY SOME LIGHT JOGGING.”

The good news: More than two-thirds of the study's clergy qualified as "flourishing" compared to only about half of the U.S. population. Clergy are more likely to report being happy, satisfied with their life, filled with a sense of direction and meaning, and enjoying many warm and trusting relationships.⁸ What appears to be a contradictory finding, given the higher-than-average depression rates, confirms what other researchers discovered. Clergy consistently demonstrate remarkable resiliency and better-than-average psychological and social functioning. These measured positives simply do not lie on the same continuum as depression, anxiety, or stress.

Hope-Filled Implications

What do these recent results say to clergy, those who care about them, and those who wish to see congregations strengthened by healthy leadership?

For clergy. After hearing about the health initiative, large numbers of clergy wanted to participate in the health program—so many that new groups had to start in waves every six months. The protocol called for assessment on key components of physical health once they agreed to participate, including weight, waist circumference, blood pressure, HDL cholesterol, and triglycerides. Even before clergy began to participate fully in the program, they showed significant improvements in these metabolic syndrome indicators, which are linked to heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Awareness and frequent monitoring of physical health indicators resulted in improved outcomes and seeing improvements helped motivate pastors to stick to an exercise plan and continue healthy eating. Screening for potential risks and access to health care is essential for long-term outcomes.

Unfortunately, the program failed to decrease rates of depression or stress symptoms. Although pastors were encouraged to nurture their family and friendships, other components of mental and social health—financial and other context stressors—went largely unaddressed.⁹ These findings underscore that clergy cannot obtain better health alone without the support of congregations and their denominational leaders.

For congregations. Lay leaders play an important role in supporting healthy behaviors in clergy. Encourage the pastor to take a day off a week, pursue a relaxing hobby or interest, get regular exercise, and spend time with family and friends. Other ways to provide stress-reducing support include honoring the boundary between ministry and personal time, offering a

Sabbatical, providing funds for continuing education or personal study (books), or granting time for participation in clergy peer groups.¹⁰ Refrain from insisting that every ministry task is equally important and must be carried out by the pastor. When pastors find ways to spend more time on their joy-filled ministry tasks, they feel greater satisfaction in ministry.

For denominations. The most highly satisfied pastors cite their denomination as a critical partner in their ministry effectiveness. Judicatory leaders can advocate for adequate salaries, housing allowances, healthcare benefits, and pensions, even for clergy in part-time positions. And they can encourage pastors to seek help with physical, psychological, or family issues.

Too many denominations struggle to provide health care resources at the regional or judicatory level. Because the bargaining advantage of national-level organizations yields better and more cost-effective benefit plans, denominations should explore new, national strategies. Further, the obligation to ensure access to full benefits and equal compensation, regardless of age, gender, or race, rests with denominational bodies.

Assessing the Rewards

For clergy: What gives you joy? How does your passion for ministry best connect to your congregation's needs?

For congregations: Have people in the congregation made too many demands on the pastor during the past year? How often have people been critical of things the pastor has done? How does your congregation make the pastor feel loved and appreciated?

For denominations: Do we regularly check in with our clergy to listen to their concerns and needs? How are we planning to improve the ministry environment to promote better clergy health?

1. Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Jason Byassee, *Faithful and Fractured: Responding to the Clergy Health Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018), 24.

2. *Ibid.*, xx-xxii.

3. *Ibid.*, xvi.

4. *Ibid.*, 84.

5. *Ibid.*, 37-38.

6. *Ibid.*, 3.

7. Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York City: Doubleday, 1972).

8. Proeschold-Bell and Byassee, 114.

9. Cynthia Woolever, "Big Ministry Trends for 2014," *The Parish Paper*, January, 2014.

10. Cynthia Woolever, "How to Avoid Pastor Burnout," *The Parish Paper*, January, 2013.